

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1623

C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 0707

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OVIP (KISSINGER, HENRY A.)

SUBJECT: SECRETARY'S TRIP TO LATIN AMERICA

REF: STATE 012756QR

1. I INFORMED THE FOREIGN MINISTER YESTERDAY AFTERNOON OF THE SECRETARY'S PROPOSED TRIP. HE THOUGHT THE GOV WOULD WELCOME THE VISIT AND HAD NO PROBLEMS WITH THE SUGGESTED DATES. HE SAID HE WOULD CHECK WITH THE PRESIDENT AND GET BACK TO ME AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. I EXPECT HIS FINAL RESPONSE TOWARD THE END OF THE DAY OR EARLY TOMORROW.

2. WITH RESPECT TO THE SECRETARY'S ACTIVITIES HERE, THE FIRST QUESTION IS HOW TO HANDLE SYMPOSIUM II, WHICH AS MATTERS NOW STAND WILL BE MEETING FEBRUARY 16-19 AT THE MACUTO SHERATON ON THE COAST. OUR FIRST THOUGHT HAD BEEN THAT THE SECRETARY MIGHT GO DIRECTLY THERE AFTER ARRIVAL, SPEAK TO THE GROUP AND THEN GO ON UP TO CARACAS. ON REFLECTION, HOWEVER, WE CONCLUDE THAT THE SECRETARY'S APPEARANCE AT THE SYMPOSIUM BEFORE SEEING THE PRESIDENT MIGHT BE MISUNDERSTOOD. THERE WILL BE A NUMBER OF PROMINENT VENEZUELANES AT THAT AFFAIR AND AN EXCHANGE WITH THEM IN WHAT WILL BE HIGHLY PUBLICIZED CIRCUMSTANCES WOULD TEND TO TAKE AWAY SOME OF THE LUSTER OF THE MEETING WITH THE PRESIDENT--A MEETING THAT IS NECESSARILY THE CENTERPIECE OF THE VISIT.

3. WE WOULD THUS SUGGEST THAT THE SECRETARY COME TO CARACAS FROM THE AIRPORT, LAY THE WREATH AT THE PANTHEON AND THEN CALL
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WITH THE FOREIGN MINISTER ON THE PRESIDENT. WE ASSUME THE LATTER

WILL WANT TO OFFER DINNER THAT EVENING. A WORKING SESSION THE NEXT MORNING OVER BREAKFAST WITH THE PRESIDENT AND KEY MEMBERS OF HIS CABONET WOULD GIVE ADEQUATE TIME AND OPPORTUNITY TO COVER THE SUBSTANTIVE FIELD. WE STRONGLY RECOMMEND THAT TIME THEREAFTER BE SET ASIDE FOR CALLS ON EX-PRESIDENTS BETANCOURT AND CALDERA. THIS MARK OF RESPECT TO MEN WHO ARE THE SYMBOLS OF DEMOCRACY IN VENEZUELA WOULD MAKE THE BEST KIND OF IMPRESSION. LUNCHEON, A PRESS CONFERENCE AND PERHAPS SOME BRIEF SIGHTSEEING (OF WHICH THERE IS NOT MUCH TO DO IN CARACAS) WOULD FOLLOW.

4. THE SECRETARY COULD GO DOWN TO THE MACUTO SHERATON IN THE LATE AFTERNOON, ADDRESS SYMPOSIUM II AND SPEND THE NIGHT THERE FOR CONVENIENCE IN LEAVING THE NEXT MORNING.

5. THIS IS A ROUGH SKETCH OF OUR IDEAS. BEFORE GETTING INTO MORE DETAIL, PARTICULARLY ON THE SOCIAL EVENTS, WE WILL NEED TO CONSULT WITH THE FOREIGN MINISTRY AT SOME LENGTH. WE WILL, OF COURSE, MAKE NO COMMITMENTS UNTIL THE SECRETARY HAS APPROVED A SCHEDULE.
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